

## Program Guidance

Each application will consist of the answers to general questions and category specific questions, as well as a program narrative. The narrative statement identifies the proposed measure to be funded, articulates the financial need of the fire department, and details the benefits to be derived from the expenditure of grant funding.

We will rank all eligible applications based on the answers to the category specific questions. We will then further evaluate the highest ranked applications using expert panelists. These experts will again use the answers to the questions along with the project narratives to ascertain the financial needs of the applicant and the benefits that would result from the grant award. In short, the narratives will be used to validate the answers to the category specific questions. Discrepancies between the narratives and the answers to the questions may result in a lower evaluation.

Keep in mind that we will use your answers to the category specific questions for the initial assessment. Your answers to these questions are the primary basis upon which we will determine whether your application warrants further evaluation. Applicants whose answers best reflect our established priorities (as outlined below and in the Federal Register Notice), will have a significantly better chance of reaching the second level of review than those applicants whose answers do not reflect our priorities.

Specific rating criteria and priorities for each of the grant categories are provided below under the descriptions of this year's eligible categories. The rating criteria, in conjunction with the program description, will provide you with an understanding of what information we are seeking with respect to the cost effectiveness of the proposed projects and your department's financial need.

**Training:** FEMA may make grants for the purpose of training firefighting personnel in fire-fighting, emergency response, supervision and safety, arson prevention and detection, handling of hazardous materials, or training firefighting personnel to provide training in any of these areas. Eligible uses of training funds include but are not limited to purchase of training curricula, training equipment and props, training services, or attendance at formal training forums.

We believe that more benefit is derived from the direct delivery of training than from the purchase of training materials and equipment. Therefore, applications focused on direct delivery of training, including train-the-trainer initiatives, will receive a higher competitive rating. We also believe that funding of basic firefighting training (i.e., training in basic firefighting duties or operating fire apparatus) has greater cost benefit than funding of officer or safety officer training, which in turn has a higher rating than specialized training. We will also accord higher rating to applicants seeking to implement statutorily required training rather than non-mandatory or strictly voluntary training. Finally, we will rate more highly those proposed programs that benefit the highest percentage of targeted personnel within a fire department or those proposed programs that will be open to other departments in their region.

**Wellness and Fitness Programs:** FEMA may make grants for the purpose of establishing and/or equipping wellness and fitness programs for firefighting personnel, including the procurement of medical services to ensure that the firefighting personnel are physically able to carry out their duties (purchase of medical equipment is not eligible under this category).

We believe that in order to have an effective wellness/fitness program, fire departments must offer both an entry physical examination and an immunization program. Accordingly, applicants for grants in this category must currently offer both benefits, or must propose to initiate both a physical examination and an immunization program with these grant funds in order to receive additional funding for either of these purposes. We believe the greatest benefit will be realized by supporting new wellness and fitness programs, and therefore, we will accord higher competitive ratings to those applicants lacking wellness/fitness programs over those applicants that already possess a wellness/fitness program. Finally, since participation is critical to achieving any benefits from a wellness or fitness program, we will give higher competitive rating to departments whose wellness and fitness programs mandate participation as well as programs that provide incentives for participation.

**Vehicles:** FEMA may make grants for the purpose of acquiring additional firefighting vehicles, including fire apparatus, or refurbishing apparatus currently owned.

We believe that more benefit will be realized by funding fire departments that own few or no firefighting apparatus than by providing funding to a department with numerous vehicles. Therefore, we will give a higher competitive rating in the apparatus category to fire departments that own few or no firefighting vehicles. We will also give higher competitive rating to departments that have not recently purchased a new firefighting vehicle, and departments that wish to replace an old, high-mileage vehicle or a vehicle that has sustained a high number of responses. We do not believe that there is sufficient cost benefit from expenditures for vehicles with ladder or aerial apparatus and will not accord positive competitive standing to applications proposing such purchases.

**Firefighting Equipment:** FEMA may make grants for the purpose of acquiring additional firefighting equipment, including equipment for individual communications and monitoring (integrated communications systems are not eligible).

We believe that this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if we provide funds to fire departments purchasing basic firefighting equipment (never owned prior to grant) to bring their departments up to the applicable minimum (i.e., as required by statute, regulation, or professional firefighting guidance), rather than to the department that is replacing equipment or enhancing capabilities. Because of the obvious benefits, we will also give higher competitive rating to departments that are mainly purchasing firefighting equipment with design features intended to protect the safety of the firefighters.

**Personal Protective Equipment:** FEMA may make grants for the purpose of acquiring personal protective equipment required for firefighting personnel by the Occupational Safety

and Health Administration, and other personal protective equipment for firefighting personnel.

One of the stated purposes of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of firefighters. In order to achieve this goal and maximize the benefit to the firefighting community, we believe that we must fund those applicants needing to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to a high percentage of their personnel. Accordingly, we will give a high competitive rating in this category to fire departments in which a large percentage of active firefighting staff do not have any personal protective equipment and to departments that wish to purchase enough PPE to equip 100 percent of their active firefighting staff. We will also give a higher competitive rating to departments that are purchasing the equipment for the first time as opposed to departments replacing obsolete or substandard equipment (e.g., equipment that does not meet current NFPA and OSHA standards), or purchasing equipment for a new mission.

**Fire prevention programs:** FEMA may make grants for the purpose of establishing or enhancing a fire prevention program.

We believe that the public as a whole will receive greatest benefit from fire prevention funds channeled to fire departments that currently do not have a prevention program. Also, we believe the public will benefit greatly from long-term fire prevention programs as opposed to limited efforts. Therefore, we will give a higher competitive rating to programs that will be self-sustaining after the grant period. Because of the benefits to be attained, we will give a higher competitive rating to programs that target one or more of USFA's identified high-risk populations (i.e., children under fourteen years of age, seniors over sixty-five and firefighters), and programs whose impact is/will be periodically evaluated. We believe public education programs and community-based, participatory programs that purchase and install residential and public detection and suppression systems achieve greater benefits than do programs that develop and enforce codes and standards. Public information materials and presentation aids and equipment achieve the least benefit, therefore, these types of activities will be accorded the lowest competitive rating.